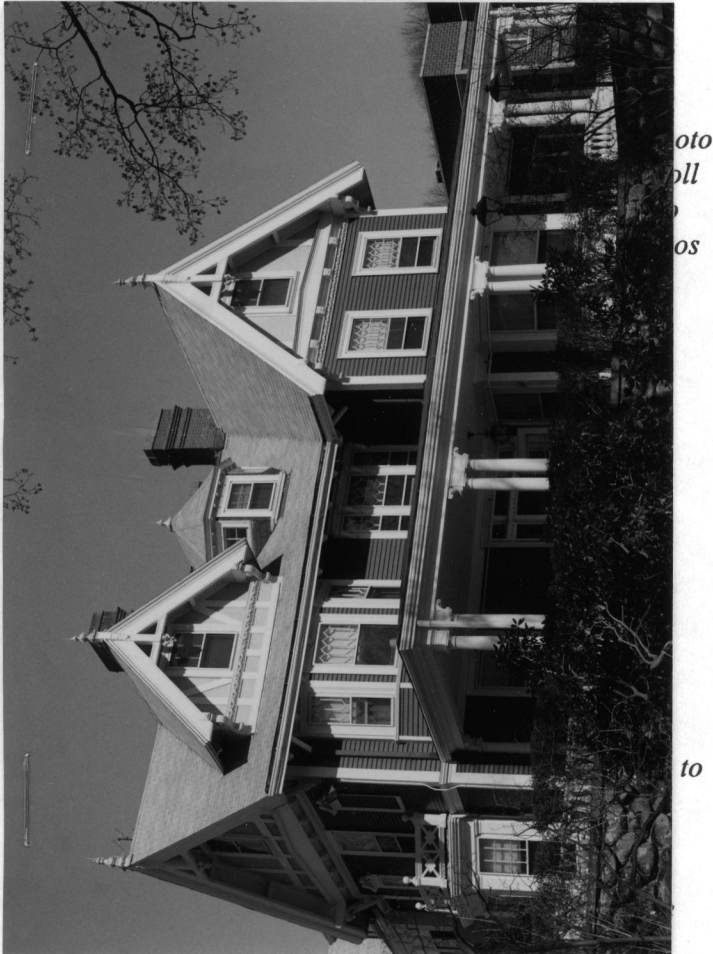


# FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125



Recorded by Nancy S. Seasholes

Organization Lexington Historical Commission

Date (month / year) February 1998

Assessor's Number 0037000082 USGS Quad Boston N. Area(s) Form Number 660

Town Lexington

Place (neighborhood or village)

Address 265 Lowell St.

Historic Name Fairlawn, also Putnam/Whipple/Wheeler House

Uses: Present Nursing Home

Original Residential

Date of Construction 1872

Source Lexington Valuation lists

Style/Form Stick Style w. English Revival Style additions

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

Foundation Granite

Wall/Trim Wood Clapboard

Roof Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

Major Alterations (with dates)

Dormers, rear extensions, and English Revival finishes (1903)

Clapboard and brick wings (after 1949)

Condition Good

Moved ☒ no ☐ yes Date

Acreage 6 A.

Setting On a wooded knoll above and far back from a busy street

## BUILDING FORM

### ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☒ *see continuation sheet*

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

265 Lowell St., or Fairlawn, is the most elaborate English Revival style mansion in Lexington. The house, at the southwest corner of the present building, is basically a series of 2½-story cross-gabled sections with pilastered ridge chimneys set on a granite foundation, clad with wood clapboards, roofed with asphalt shingles, and ornamented with exuberant finishes, some of which derive from the original Stick Style house. The asymmetrical facade has a large projecting front gable with finishes similar to those on other gables and dormers: a finial, a king post truss with a carved drop, half-timbered stucco walls, a pedimented base board outlined with bead-and-reel molding set over decorative bracket ends and rope-and-flower molding, and curved brackets at the eaves. (Much simpler versions of this gable treatment are also on the houses at 3 Chandler St. [MHC #394] and 24 Oakland St. [MHC #376]). On the facade is also a smaller gabled dormer with similar finishes and between the dormer and gable is a small hexagonal dormer with a peaked roof. The facade has diamond-patterned windows on the second floor and small-paned on the first—another finish characteristic of the entire house. The porch roof is supported by paired Tuscan columns with capitals of a unique diamond design, the rail has elaborate balusters, and the front door has side- and transom lights with elaborate leaded tracery. The south elevation has two large gables similar to those on the facade, a window with a broken pediment head, a semi-

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ *see continuation sheet*

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

The original part of Fairlawn was built in 1872 by Charles R. Putnam, who in 1870 had purchased the 300-acre "Shagbark Farm" from Benjamin Fiske. Fiske had gone to Boston in the early 19th century and become a merchant but returned to Lexington in 1837 and acquired the various parcels that became his farm, one of which had been Samuel Downing's dairy farm. After Putnam bought the property in 1870, he built a new house in 1872 behind the existing Greek Revival cottage, a construction date indicated by the rise in the assessed value of Putnam's house from \$1300 in 1872 to \$15,000 in 1873. Historical photographs indicate that the new house was a rather elaborate five-by-five bay Stick Style building with a hip roof surmounted by a widow's walk, a pilastered chimney in a different location from any of the present ones, and cross gables with half-timbering over patterned shingles or with picket-fence siding in the pediments. Some of the original features still exist, i.e., the gables on the present facade and west elevations and the shed-roofed dormer on the west (the hexagonal dormer on the facade is in the same location as a former gabled dormer). Putnam farmed the property, sold it in 1890, and in 1893 it was acquired in the name of Thomas B. Morrill.

The purchaser was actually J. Reed Whipple from Boston, who had begun as a Roxbury grocer, become a buyer for the Parker House, and had eventually bought the Parker House, Young's Hotel, and the Hotel Touraine. According to the story told by

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☒ *see continuation sheet*

Lexington Valuation Lists. 1870–1875, 1880, 1884, 1892–1904.

Middlesex Registry of Deeds. Deeds. Cambridge, MA. 359: 269; 1116: 43; 2179: 99; 1968: 352; 2275: 476; 3714: 533; 3726: 521.

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———. "Then & Now." *Lexington Minute-man*, 26 October, 1995.

———. "Gothic home has legacy of history, romance." *Lexington Minute-man*, 7 October 1993.

———. "Beginnings - The Story of Fairlawn." Draft article. In possession of Thomas P. Sileo, Chelmsford, MA.

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town  
Lexington

Property Address  
265 Lowell St.

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	660
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## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

circular bay surmounted by an elaborate balustrade, and a small hexagonal dormer similar to that on the facade. The north elevation is characterized by two large gables that match those on the south elevation though with egg-and-dart rather than rope-and-flower molding, a shed-roofed dormer between them, small windows with broken pediment heads, a projecting one-story bay surmounted by a balustrade whose diamond-patterned rail echoes the design of the porch capitals, another one-story bay with a stained glass window and bell-shaped copper roof, and a similar bell-shaped copper roof supported by Tuscan columns and acanthus brackets over a side entry that has egg-and-dart molding at the cornice and leaded side- and transom lights. To this original house have been added unsympathetic additions; those closest to the house are clad with wood clapboards and the rest with brown brick.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

nursing home residents, much of which is substantiated by deeds, Whipple's wife was an invalid who lived at the Parker House, but Whipple had fallen in love with the Parker House cashier, Mary A. Morrill, and bought Shagbark Farm for her. Whipple used the farm's produce, which included over 100 head of cattle, to supply his hotels and kept thoroughbred horses at Winning Farm in Woburn, which he also owned. In 1898 Whipple and Mary Morrill began to transform the estate, that year adding a high-style Colonial Revival stable with interior paneling and a brass names plate on each horse's stall, a structure pictured in historical photographs of the estate. In 1903 they began to remodel the house, which they called Cedarcrest, into the present English Revival Style mansion. That year the farm barn was also enlarged and a windmill and a hexagonal water tower added, the last also pictured in historical photographs.

Whipple died in 1910, Mary sold the property in 1912, and in 1917 the farm was acquired by Harvey C. Wheeler of Roxbury, the founder of the Towel Cleaning Supply Company, which distributed cloth towels throughout the Boston area. The Wheelers traveled extensively but used Fairlawn, as they called the Lexington house, as a summer residence. The Wheeler Place, as it was known in Lexington, included a pool surrounded by statues and a greenhouse. There were elaborate gardens including a Dutch garden, Italian rose garden, and English rose garden, connected by a system of paths that led over a brook and bridges to a windmill and fruit orchards. In 1930, however, the Wheelers purchased a house on Pelham Rd. in Lexington, Fairlawn was closed down, and the farm was then sold off in various lots. In 1949 Fairlawn was acquired by the Walshes and converted into a nursing home.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES (continued)

Smith, George O. "The Milk Business and Milk Men of Earlier Days." *Proceedings of the Lexington Historical Society* 2 (1900): 194.

Whipple, S. Lawrence. Notes on Putnam/Whipple/Wheeler House (Fairlawn Nursing Home). In possession of S. Lawrence Whipple, Lexington, MA.



# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

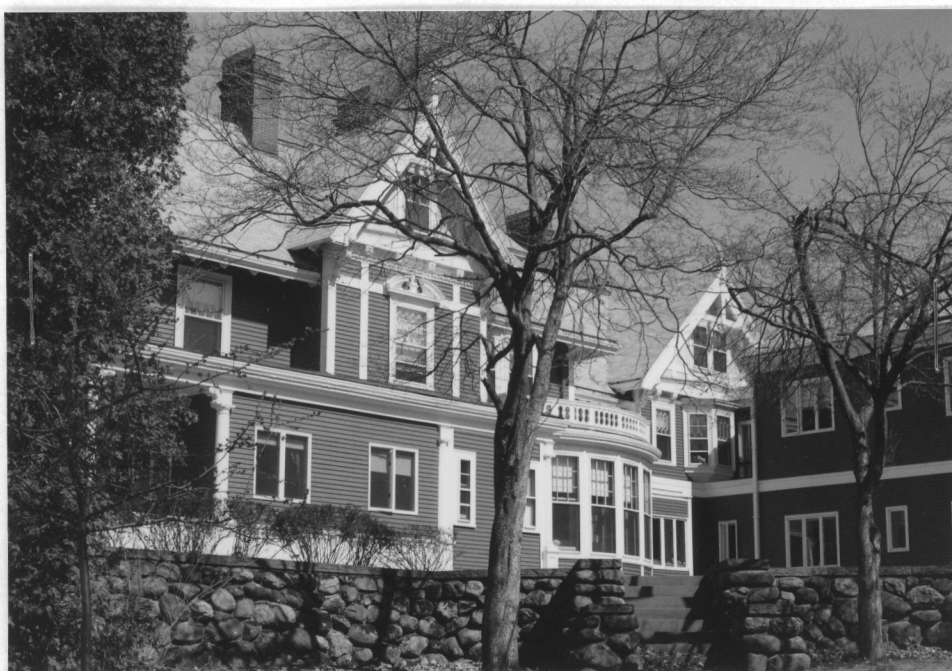
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Roll #7, Negative #18



Roll #8, Negative #36